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INFO: DEPARTMENT OF STATE
CINCPAC for POLAD, DANANG

FROM :

SUBJECT : Amembassy SAIGON

REF :

EXCISE

Conversation with Revolutionary Dai Viet Leaders

DATE: March 16, 1967

This airgram transmits a memorandum of conversation with Revolutionary Dai Viet leader Ha thuc Ky and Constituent Assembly Deputy of the Dai Chung (Greater People's) bloc.

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Enclosure:
MemCon as stated above.

Action assigned to
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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE: March 4, 1967

SUBJECT: Presidential Elections

PARTICIPANTS: Ha thuc Ky, Revolutionary Dai Viet leader
[ ] Constituent Assembly
Richard W. Teare, Second Secretary of Embassy
David F. Lambertson, Second Secretary of Embassy

During the course of a long conversation, Ky and made the following points about the prospects for the presidential election:

Presidential Race. Ky believes that the field has effectively narrowed to four candidates: himself; Phan khac Suu; Tran van Huong; and the military candidate. The military candidate is of course the one to worry about. Ky and fear that however equitable the campaign support provisions may look on paper, the military candidate will have many resources that his civilian opponents will lack. (Ky digressed to tell several derogatory stories about the behavior of VNAF pilots and the ways in which they antagonize the population, but he concluded that VNAF and its aircraft will be a major advantage to the military candidate, particularly if that candidate is Nguyen cao Ky.)

Nguyen van Thieu vs. Nguyen cao Ky. Ha thuc Ky believes that Nguyen cao Ky is clearly the stronger of the two military contenders. He and agreed that if a vote were taken now within the Directorate Nguyen cao Ky would be a certain winner (and a very likely winner in a vote by the Armed Forces Council). Ky and claimed that the current round of anti-"false peace" demonstrations was attributable to the rivalry between the two generals, but they could give no convincing arguments to support this contention. They said other motives -- such as the strengthening of domestic determination or the showing of a militant stand to the world at large -- were secondary. Ky then told several stories designed to illustrate Thieu's weakness. One in particular concerned a Tet gift-giving ceremony organized by General Loan; Thieu allegedly attended and was greeted by Loan, who was wearing Japanese rubber sandals and had been drinking. Loan made insulting remarks about Thieu to his face, but Thieu "weakly" left without so much as rebuking Loan.

Ky's Running Mate. Ha thuc Ky said he had not decided who his vice-presidential candidate would be, except for the obvious choice of a Southerner. He thinks it would be a good idea to get someone well-versed in economics because this will be a major problem area for the

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